

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1455
By Johnson R

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Sonny Smith upon his brilliant career in coaching basketball.

WHEREAS, this General Assembly is pleased to specially honor and commend those successful coaches who, through their magnificent exploits, bring honor to the State of Tennessee and serve as exceptional ambassadors of this State; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee has been blessed by a bounty of tremendous athletes, coaches, and championship athletic teams, both amateur and professional, who have proudly represented the citizens of this State as honorable competitors, both on and off the basketball court; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame was established to appropriately recognize those talented individuals who have reached the elite rank of their competition, earning the deep respect and admiration of their players and opponents alike, while achieving excellence on the court and bringing success to themselves and their teams; and

WHEREAS, the son of the late Grigg and Irma Smith, Sonny Smith, a native of Roan Mountain, Tennessee, was born on November 15, 1936; and

WHEREAS, a tremendous athlete, Coach Smith played basketball at Cloudland High School and received a scholarship to play basketball at Holmes Junior College in Mississippi; after two years at Holmes Junior College, he transferred to Milligan College to play basketball; and

WHEREAS, after finishing his stellar collegiate basketball career, Sonny Smith played in a semi-professional "barnstorming" league for the Pepsi-Cola All-Stars, touring throughout Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, nicknamed "Suitcase Sonny Smith," he has coached basketball for numerous high school and collegiate programs across this Nation; and

WHEREAS, Coach Smith began his collegiate coaching career at the College of William and Mary, where he served as an Assistant Coach; he went on to serve as Assistant Coach at Pepperdine University and Virginia Tech; and

WHEREAS, in his first collegiate head coaching position, Sonny Smith served at East Tennessee State, where he went 30-23 over two years; and

WHEREAS, Sonny Smith then became Head Coach of the Auburn University basketball team, achieving an extraordinary record of 173-154 in eleven seasons; and

WHEREAS, Sonny Smith coached at Auburn University from 1977-1989, leading the Tigers to 173 wins and five consecutive NCAA Basketball Tournament appearances; and

WHEREAS, while at Auburn, Sonny Smith recruited and coached NBA greats Charles Barkley, Chuck Person, and Chris Morris; and

WHEREAS, under Coach Smith's able leadership and guidance, the Auburn Tigers won the 1985 SEC Tournament and advanced to the Elite Eight in the 1986 NCAA Basketball Tournament; and

WHEREAS, Coach Smith moved on to Virginia Commonwealth University, where he went 136-127 over nine years before retiring in 1998; and

WHEREAS, Coach Smith served as an Assistant Coach for the United States Basketball Teams of the Pan American Games and the Olympic Games, a testament to his singular expertise and immense knowledge of the game of basketball; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his immeasurable contributions to basketball, the Cloudland High School gymnasium was named in his honor; Sonny Smith was also named to the Holmes Junior College Hall of Fame, the Milligan College Hall of Fame and the North East Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Sonny Smith currently works as a color commentator for televised SEC basketball games, and he hosts a weekly television college basketball show for CSS; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to honors and accolades, Sonny Smith was named Ohio Valley Coach of the Year in 1978, the SEC Coach of the Year in 1984 and 1988, the Metro Conference

Coach of the Year in 1993, and the Colonial Athletic Association Coach of the Year in 1996; he is the only coach to receive Coach of the Year honors in four different leagues; and

WHEREAS, while no list of achievements and statistics could accurately measure his enormous contributions to the sport of basketball, Sonny Smith won the Ohio Valley Conference Title in the 1977-1978 season and the Southern Conference Tournament in 1985, and he advanced to the NCAA Tournament on six separate occasions, five consecutive times with Auburn and once with Virginia Commonwealth; he has 339 career wins; and

WHEREAS, his many professional accomplishments aside, Sonny Smith is most thankful for the love and companionship he shares with his wife, Jan, and their marriage has been blessed with two children, Steve and Sheri, and four grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Sonny Smith epitomizes the spirit of volunteerism and commitment to excellence that are characteristic of all true Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, this legislative body wishes to grasp this golden opportunity to recognize Sonny Smith for his stellar coaching career and his commitment to excellence in every endeavor; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and congratulate Coach Sonny Smith upon his brilliant career in coaching basketball and recommend his induction into the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame. We commend his life of coaching excellence and service, and wish him every success in all future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.